



PHEASANT AND QUAIL COOPERATORS EARLY SEASON REPORT

Early season reports from pheasant cooperators allow biologists to quickly assess hunter success and local field conditions across Michigan's Lower Peninsula (Zones 2 and 3) at the beginning of the pheasant season. This report summarizes their responses for October 20-23, 2005. Generally, the 2005 season appears to be similar to last year.

Cooperators returned 73 surveys and hunted 461 hours in 25 counties during the survey period. Respondents hunted most in southern lower Michigan [Zone 3] (Table 1). The individual counties having at least 10 hours of hunting with greater than 1 rooster flush per hour were Ingham, Tuscola, and Lenawee Counties (Table 2).

Most respondents (61%) thought pheasant populations were down from last year in the areas they hunted, with 26% reporting populations the same or slightly down from last year (Table 3).

Hunters commented that the weather was favorable during the season opener, with cool conditions in most areas. Many noted that food and cover were good, while others indicated that standing crops may have contributed to low success. Comments on pheasant numbers ranged from "lots of birds" to "no birds." Comments about habitat quality were just as varied, from "cover very good" to "not enough grassland." These comments are similar to those in recent years, indicating pheasant numbers and habitat are unevenly distributed in Michigan.

Table 1. Rooster and hen flush rates by zone and year for October 20 - 23.

Zone	2004			2005		
	Hours	Roosters / hour	Hens / hour	Hours	Roosters / hour	Hens / hour
2	23.0	0.3	0.4	2.5	0.0	0.0
3	587.6	1.0	1.2	458.4	0.9	1.1
Statewide	610.6	0.9	1.2	460.9	0.9	1.1

Table 2. Pheasant flush rates by county for October 20-23, 2005.

County:	Hours:	Roosters / hour:	Hens / hour:
Berrien	6	1.5	0.9
Branch	6	1.6	0.0
Calhoun	9	0.2	0.1
Clinton	6	0.2	0.2
Gratiot	20	0.5	1.7
Hillsdale	28	0.7	1.1
Huron	71	0.8	1.3
Ingham	18	2.4	3.4
Ionia	7	1.0	0.3
Isabella	19	0.2	0.2
Jackson	8	1.6	1.9
Kent	5	0.6	0.4
Lapeer	10	0.1	0.0
Lenawee	53	1.1	1.3
Livingston	3	0.6	0.3
Mecosta	19	0.2	0.0
Midland	19	0.5	1.2
Montcalm	25	0.2	0.5
Oakland	4	0.0	0.0
Osceola	3	0.0	0.0
Ottawa	3	0.7	0.3
Saginaw	4	5.3	4.8
St. Clair	31	0.4	0.5
Sanilac	24	0.2	0.1
Tuscola	63	1.8	1.6

Table 3. Hunter opinions about pheasant populations.

Trend	2004	2005
Up	6%	8%
Slightly Up	6%	5%
Same	18%	16%
Slightly Down	15%	10%
Down	54%	61%

